

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 08174 211032Z

21

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SUBJECT: KISSINGER VISIT TO PRC: ROK REACTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: WHILE ROK PRESS HAS VOICED STANDARD KOREAN NERVOUSNESS ABOUT SECRETARY'S PEKING TIP, OVER-ALL TONE OF PRESS COVERAGE OF VISIT HAS BEEN FAVORABLE, REFLECTING OFFICIAL VIEWS. ROKS HAVE AT SAME TIME SHARPLY CRITICIZED JAPANESE SUGGESTION OF DIRECT U.S./NORTH KOREAN TALKS. END SUMMARY.

1. ARTICLES ABOUT SECRETARY'S VISIT TO PEKING WERE GIVEN FRONT PAGE TREATMENT IN OCTOBER 19 PAPERS, COMPETING SUCCESSFULLY IN MOST CASES FOR HEADLINES WITH STORIES ABOUT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY NORMALIZATION WHICH FOLLOWED WEEK-LONG CONTROVERSY OVER ATTEMPTED EXPULSION OF OPPOSITION MEMBER. ON OCTOBER 20 AND 21 TRIP DOMINATED FRONT PAGES AND WAS ALSO GIVEN EXTENSIVE FEATURE ARTICLE COVERAGE ON PAGE THREE. KOREAN PRESS, AND ROKG OFFICIALS, HAVE FOCUSED ON SECRETARY KISSINGER'S PROPOSED FOUR-POWER CONFERENCE IN KOREAN SECURITY AS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MAJOR TOPICS IN

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 08174 211032Z

SECRETARY'S DISCUSSIONS IN PEKING.

2. MOST OF PRESS COMMENT ON SECRETARY'S TRIP TO PEKING HAS BEEN UP-BEAT. PRESS HAS EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN U.S. INTENTION TO DEFEND ROK INTERESTS AND WELCOMED THE TRIP AS OPENING UP POSSIBILITIES FOR RESOLVING THE VEXING KOREAN QUESTION. A FEW ARTICLES MENTION GREAT EXPECTATIONS KOREANS HAVE FROM KISSINGER TALKS IN PEKING, BUT MOST CONCLUDE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROGRESS ARE LIMITED. CHONNAM ILBO IN OCTOBER 17 ARTICLE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE SECRETARY WILL AVOID DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH NORTH KOREA AND WILL INSTEAD CONCENTRATE ON CONCRETE DISCUSSIONS OF KOREA WITH THE PRC. HANGUK ILBO, OCTOBER 17, ADVOCATED DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN U.S., PRC, SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA WITH SUBSEQUENT EXPANSION OF DIALOGUE TO INCLUDE RUSSIA AND JAPAN BUT SAID TRIP NOT LIKELY TO PRODUCE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN U.S.-CHINESE RELATIONS. TONGA ILBO OCTOBER 19, WHILE CRITICIZING JAPAN'S REPORTED ADVOCACY OF DIRECT U.S.-NORTH KOREA DIALOGUE AS WEAKENING SEOUL'S POSITION FOR BENEFIT OF NORTH KOREA, SAID KISSINGER PEKING VISIT WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND STABILITY ON KOREAN PENINSULA.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW ARTICLES ALSO EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT SOME ASPECTS OF THE TRIP. HANGUK ILBO IN OCTOBER 17 ARTICLE WAS ANXIOUS THAT SUFFICIENT CONSULTATIONS MAY NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH THE ROKG PRIOR TO THE PEKING TRIP, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FON MIN KIM TONG-CHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN "SATISFACTORILY BRIEFED" DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON OCTOBER 13. PRESS ALSO REFLECTED GENERAL PUBLIC WORRY HERE THAT PRC WILL TRY TO PERSUADE USG TO MAKE DIRECT CONTACT WITH NORTH KOREA AND THAT SUCH CONTACT, IF IT WERE TO OCCUR, COULD DAMAGE ROK INTERESTS DURING CRUCIAL UNGA DEBATE OF KOREAN QUESTION. IN THIS CONNECTION SEVERAL PAPERS (MAEIL SHINMUN AND SEOUL SHINMUN, OCTOBER 18, AND CHOSON ILBO, OCTOBER 17) HAVE REACTED SHARPLY TO STORIES THAT JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER MIYAZAWA HAS URGED DIRECT U.S.-NORTH KOREA CONTACT. ROKG PRIVATE REACTION TO STORIES OF JAPANESE PROPOSALS HAS ALSO BEEN EXTREMELY CAUSTIC.

4. STORIES THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB MIGHT VISIT PYONGYANG DURING PEKING VISIT HAVE ALSO APPEARED IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 SEOUL 08174 211032Z

PRESS HERE, BUT HAVE BEEN DISMISSED IN PRESS COMMENT AS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. THUS FAR, WE HAVE SEEN NO PYONGYANG COMMENT ON THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.

COMMENT: PRESS LINE HAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED PRIVATELY EXPRESSED OFFICIAL VIEWS WITHIN ROKG. WHILE TYPICALLY SOMEWHAT NERVOUS ABOUT MAJOR POWER TALK WHICH MAY AFFECT ITS OWN INTERESTS, OVERALL TONE OF BOTH ROK OFFICIALS' REMARKS

AND PRESS HAS BEEN FAVORABLE AND CONFIDENT THAT U.S. WILL
NOT DO ANYTHING IN PEKING TO ADVERSELY AFFECT ROK. ON OTHER
HAND PRESS AND OFFICIALS' REMARKS HAVE TAKEN SHARP AIM AT
JAPANESE ADVOCACY OF CONTACTS BETWEEN U.S. AND NORTH KOREA
WITHOUT RECIPROCITY, WHICH APPEARS TO STRIKE AT HEART OF SOUTH
KOREAN POLICY VIS-A-VIS DPRK.
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